

MEMOIRS OF LINCOLN

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H. Chrisman.

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# *Memoirs of Lincoln*

By HERRING CHRISMAN



*Written in 1900*

## FOREWORD

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The following pages in this booklet, from the pen of my father, Herring Chrisman, are submitted to all those interested in Abraham Lincoln, his forbears and his contemporaries.

Abraham Lincoln's grandmother, Bathsheba Herring, and Herring Chrisman's great grandfather, John Herring, were brother and sister. Herring Chrisman was born September 16, 1823, in Rockingham County, Virginia, where many of Lincoln's forbears lived, and where his father, George Harrison Chrisman, was a large planter and slave owner. The youthful Herring had a Negro boy of his own age as his personal slave as long as he remained at home. He was educated at Washington and Lee University and became Commonwealth Attorney for Rockingham County at the age of twenty-one years. During the menacing days of secession he became a member of the Chicago Bar, where he worked to keep the Union together without force of arms, for the rebellion was to him a war between brothers as his two younger brothers entered the Confederate army. Since he personally knew Lincoln, the practicing attorney, in Illinois, and then lived on through the years in which Lincoln's name became immortalized, it was natural that Herring Chrisman was well fitted to express the thought of the times in regard to Lincoln.

The writer felt that with the ever growing reverence for Abraham Lincoln, and the increasing demand for information concerning his life, that this contribution might add somewhat to the already brilliant luster of his undying name.

Mapleton, Iowa.

WILLIAM H. CHRISMAN.

## LINCOLN'S FORBEARS—A ROMANCE.

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God can't make ancestors; He only makes forbears for his great.

Among all the list of his obscure blood relation in Virginia, and I personally knew as many as thirty-nine of them during my short stay in their neighborhood, the most noteworthy person was no doubt grandmother Lincoln. This lady's life was full of a most strange mystery from first to last. Marked as she was from her earliest youth by an imperturbable gentleness of spirit, and an ineffable winsomeness of manner that won and bound all hearts in her circle to her; the only daughter of a very old house, residing on one of the largest and loveliest estates in the beautiful valley of the Shenandoah, with two brothers devoted almost as lovers to her, and wearing as she did the euphonious and poetical name of Bathsheba, so preserved and embalmed in holy writ, it is hard to understand why she should have persisted in marrying the wild and rollicking border ruffian Abraham Lincoln, however handsome and stalwart he may have been.

That she should have made a crazy, mad-cap Boone of him, and incited him to break up his own little home, with his house built by his own hands on a gentle bluff, the door yard sloping down to the streamlet at its base, and go wandering far beyond the utmost frontier, deep down into the dark and bloody Indian hunting grounds, under pretense of wanting more land for her children, is still more strange. But that she should have persisted after her husband was killed in spite of all her brother's pleadings to come back to him, in standing guard over the lonely grave, enduring untold dangers and hardships, not to say want, on her rich but unbroken forest land, is a mystery in view of her gentle nature no man can solve. Was it a mere piece of woman's fanciful romance, or was it an inspiration of some invisible spirit that held her fast in order that her grandson might grow and attain his stature among these large and uplifting scenes and catch the fresh spirit of that grand and brave and magnanimous and liberty loving influx of glorious men that were so loyally to uphold his arm to crush the mighty rebellion and preserve the unity of the nation which so fondly from the first was meant for the happy home and refuge of the poor and oppressed of all the lands. No stone or even cypress marks the place where this lady's ashes rest, but she deserves to live embalmed in her great descendant's sacred fame.

I have said that Mrs. Lincoln was of a very old family and I make little doubt it was as old in England as the Norman Conquest itself, but it was non-historical then and remains so to this day, and I have to rely on family traditions alone, but they are doubtless quite as true and reliable as any of the solemn old stories we read in the most worm-eaten old books. Her story as it comes to me is



that her father was an English gentleman, born in Norfolk county, England, not far from the beginning of the eighteenth century. His family had been settled for many centuries in that county and still clings to its Coat of Arms in its old home on that side. These Arms, of which a copy has been imported as a memento to this side, purports on the face of it to have been granted to a certain Lord Vi Compte of their family name, a title of no great dignity and long since lapsed, and recites he was of that "ancient family" and bearing date of 1374. One of the emblems that appears upon this Coat of Arms is the picture of a boar's head in allusion to a well remembered contest between two brothers of his house and a famous wild boar in which the savage beast killed one brother and the other brother killed the boar. Now as the wild boar industry was in full feather in Merrie England among the lords and ladies of William's court and as the name of these gentlemen has a very French twang to anyone's ear accustomed to those barbaric sounds, I infer they were distinctly of that much venerated set whose descendants still claim the right to stand nearest the throne and kiss the queen's hand as often and as fervently as they wish.

I have said that Lincoln's great grandfather on the female side was an English gentleman. Lawyers know what that means, but the "common people" don't. It means in England a man who doesn't have to work and wouldn't if he had. With us it means a man who would not live without work if he could—the number is not so very large. This person was born into that set, which is about the only way to get into it. His parents died while he was a boy and his aunt became his guardian. As he had some means, she sent him to a boarding school with all due dispatch, no doubt. That is an institution designed to punish gentlemen's sons for being born or mayhap to get them out of harm's way at home. Now, this land was of a peculiar turn. He became disgusted with his idle and precarious kind of life, for the discipline was harsh enough, and incontinently ran away and hired himself to a shipmaster who was about to sail for the colonies, to work his passage over. In what colony he was put ashore or by what manner of work he subsisted till he became of age is not now known. When he came of age it is presumed he realized his means in England, for he married a wife about that time and bought a farm near New Castle, Delaware, and lived on it while his four children, three boys and one girl were being born.

About the year 1750 he started with his family up the Shenandoah Valley, and when he got to where the forest was dense enough to suit his taste and log cabins far enough apart not to crowd and jostle much, he came to a halt and began to look about for some land to buy. He struck the heads of two streams which rose in two great springs, each large enough to turn a mill as soon as it took a start to run, and each creek fertilized some of the finest lands in the world and these lands won his heart. These streams started from

the plain about four miles apart, and near the head of the one on Linville's Creek he bought a fair-sized tract and settled Leonard, his eldest son.

About three miles lower down this creek, John Lincoln had not long before acquired the fairest and largest plat, and thus began a chain to weave itself into solemn fate that led at last to grand results to men and nations then unborn. A few miles further south on Cook's Creek beginning hard by where the village of Dayton stands, he found a tract of 1,100 acres extending down on both sides of the stream for a mile or two, more inviting to the view than his fondest hopes had dared to fashion, and made it home. His two younger sons with our Bathsheba were then his family besides dogs and horses, his wife being dead.

Whether he ever owned a slave, as was allowable even in Delaware then, is not now known, though both younger sons as well as John Lincoln's eldest son and heir did indulge themselves later on in that comfortable folly, not to call it by a harder name. Whether our English gentleman ever soiled his hands or not, it is admitted that his sons did in fair and pleasant weather indulge in some light toil, but the father's chief concern was to exterminate the wolves and foxes from his possessions, and though he allowed no guns used against his wide antlered stags and their innocent does and fawns, they soon scampered off to the neighboring hills where they suffered him to wind his melodious huntsman's horn and listen to the sweet, melodious baying of his hounds while they showed their heels in reasonable safety as long as no one was allowed to shoot. But alas! with the tender Bathsheba for his nurse and cook and no rude alarms of war or harsh discussions about unclaimed political rights to disturb his rest, his life glided so smoothly and swiftly away that no horrid thoughts of death with primogeniture cruelty and wrong ever entered his head. His sons had both married and been settled on both sides of the creek in fair rifle shot reach of each other with only a stretch of variagated meadow between, nor was his domicile scarce farther away, the loveliest spot on the estate and doubtless meant for his daughter when he was passed to the great beyond. But man proposes and God disposes. When he was dead without a will, it was found that everything had descended to his eldest son, who promptly began to assume his rights. The dawn of a better day for younger children had, however begun to appear in the east; the rights of man were being quite too warmly asserted by his neighbors and he prudently sold his rights to his brothers at a price they thought best to give and left for parts unknown and has never been heard from since. Womans' rights being unborn, and not even imagined at that time, and not owning and having steadily refused to own or control a man, her father being alive, it did not seem possible for her to acquire property by purchase and she was left wholly unprovided for in the deal and would have been forlorn enough if her two brothers and their two wives

had not all loved her to distraction and had not taken her in their arms and each contended with the other in amicable strife who should have her and give to her oftenest and most of their affection and their substance. Nor was there any great sacrifice in this, for she was helpful, active and strong and was worth her weight in gold, as Abraham Lincoln of Linville's Creek was not long in finding out. His father had also died without a will and left him under the power of an elder brother, and not more generous heir. But he was of that sort that makes bold to help themselves and had already hewed out a sufficient home for himself.

Now these Lincolns were of a different strain from the Cook Creek folks and didn't give a fig whether their blood was blue or red. They had no traditions and didn't want any. They would much rather fight in the wars as they always did, from the Revolution to the Rebellion, and always on the rebel side, than dig and grope for an ancestral line. So when drawn towards her at first by the similitude of the wrongs they had suffered alike from the law, he presented himself to Bathsheba as a suitor, he was the very heroic sort to fit her own slumbering heroism of nature and they promptly made it home on his little farm which I have in another number described. For whether he was wrought out of porcelain or common clay she recognized in him some diamond qualities of high honor and stern integrity and dauntless physical nerve such as she desired to bequeath and perpetuate in her line and which by God's grace she did.

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### LINCOLN'S PARENTS—A ROMANCE

It will be forty years next summer that I called at the house where Bathsheba Lincoln was married in the old Colonial days. The scenes around it had been familiar to me in my childhood in-so-much that I could even recall the face and form of the brother that had loved her so well, all the more, perhaps, for her lonely, sad life in her wild western home. He was a gentle and kindly old man, much loved and cherished by his family, including his slaves. He had educated two of his slaves and one was a professor in Liberia College and the other soon followed him. At the time of this call I made at his place, he had been long dead, but some of his children were still there. The place was much as he left it, much as it was when I was a child, for the grass was as green in the meadow close by, and the trees as sturdy and strong in the orchard and the ground under their thick shade as well covered with ripe yellow fruit. The house had grown grayer outside, yellow pine though it was, but within, though it had never smelled paint, it was scoured as spick and span as a new born pin. The thin, quavering voices of the inmates told of old age, and at the mention of Lincoln their memories flashed back to a still older time and one and another would recall his father and mother who had first met in that old home. One would recite that their Aunt Lin-



coln's son Thomas was back from Kentucky when first grown. Another remembered that Nancy Hanks lived just over the hill as she always had and was often at the house, and all agreed what a joyous, jolly good fellow Thomas was, so handy and helpful in door and out, and what a dear, good girl but more sober and sedate, Nancy Hanks was, and how helpful in sickness and sorrow she was, and beyond her age. After their marriage in Kentucky, to which Thomas had returned and Nancy had emigrated some while later, with her family, they had both dropped out of sight, and their son had never been heard of till his name had appeared just then like a hand writing on the wall and made them tremble for their slaves.

The old yellow pine Colonial house still marks the spot where it then stood, almost the only house in the countryside that Sheridan didn't burn one morning when his Irish was up.

When Lincoln's parents were first married they had but little to start with, we may very well guess, for neither had a father to help them, and Thomas, like his long dead sire, was a younger son, and the land which his mother had dared so much to "possess and hold" for her children had passed by the same Colonial law to Mordecai, the eldest son. But no Lincoln had ever tried to rear a family without a farm, and Thomas had soon bought one. They say it was very poor land, and that is no doubt true, for slavery had encircled and possessed itself of all that was rich enough to maintain a slave. But poor as it was, he supported his family on it till his son was born when he began to feel impelled to seek a more congenial soil for him to farm, but the straw that broke the camel's back was slavery, beyond a doubt, for long years afterward he told his son he had left Kentucky on account of slavery and bad titles, which latter was a great drawback to that state for many long years. When he reached Indiana and had a good title to a fat piece of land, he was once more on the glorious young border where nearly all the land as well as pasturage and game and many other good things were free, and where men of all races always had been and always were to be born "free and equal," and he would have lived the happiest life in the world—as indeed he did for some years—but for two things of which I shall hereafter have to speak.

I am persuaded, from all I know of all these people, and all I know and have myself enjoyed of the delicious border life, that Thomas Lincoln's first years in Indiana were one long drawn honeymoon, if not more than equivalent to many bridal trips that have been made, in the lap of an artificial luxury, around the world. True, when he drove down his first stakes in the primeval forest, and the trees were very large, there was too much work to do before perfect rest could be properly begun, and though like his son after he grew up he was quick and strong beyond other men and had rare sleight with his axe and could work like a blizzard when he had to, but still like his son he didn't crave work merely for its own sake and having been

brought up in the woods he knew very well how to make a little work go a long way and soon had his family settled to his heart's content. Indeed he was a reasonable man and didn't need a great deal. Like his son he cared nothing for money, and having escaped the snares of literary training in early life, he was as free from any longings after fame as he was for any irksome wealth. A log cabin didn't take long to build and with a patch large enough to raise bread, with the best of range for his cows and a few sheep, and mast for his pigs, and his unerring rifle to bring down a fat stag, a tender fawn, a long-bearded gobbler, or plump cock pheasant, of which the woods was full, if he was not a gentleman of elegant leisure, I should like to know who was. Then, too, he was handy with tools, like his son, and found a keen delight in fashioning a cradle for the baby on a stormy day, and if a sombre mood ever overtook him, he could easily work it off by nailing up a good tight coffin for a dear old friend.

In one respect, at least, he quite surpassed his son and quite equalled him in another. He could enjoy a camp meeting to a finish, and could follow the preacher with quite as eloquent and effectual a prayer as the best, and on a cold winter's night, with a back-log ablaze on the hearth, he could tell as many funny stories and keep his back-woods neighbors in as loud a roar as his son ever did a court house crowd.

But all earthly joys must have checks. His beloved Nancy would nurse the sick, of which there was not a few near them, and pray for their souls more than her strength would bear, and she sickened and died, and he mourned her loss, and often no doubt, wept with his sorrowful little boy over his "angel mother's" grave. But grief, to make life tolerable, must have an end, and in his lonely hours his thoughts began to recall certain passages he had had in the long, long ago in Kentucky, and began to feel drawn to cross the Ohio to see the dear old girls once more, and lo behold, he found dear Sally Bush a widow, and not unamenable to such arguments as he could adduce to her to try once more the more solid joys and comforts of the connubial life, and took her with him with no mean dispatch, and she soon proved herself not only another good wife to himself but another good mother to his son, and he was once more the happiest of men.

But his son had at length attained a great stature, and his mind and heart both began to swell with the destiny that was in him. When the son announced he must go to Illinois, the heart of his father was like to break at the thought of parting from him, but after solemn consultation with Sally—she could not stand it either—the son was told to hitch up the oxen to the wagon and load in the traps—they didn't wait to sell—and out across the Wabash and down the Sangamon, 'way they drove, rejoicing in the new border life before them, and their son pitched their tent and made it home for them, where as long as either

of them lived they could see him climbing higher and higher up the ladder of fame, and yet both were spared the pain of witnessing the final cruel taking off, which has lent a royal purple coloring to his immortal and colossal fame as nothing else could.

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### LINCOLN'S CONTEMPORARY KIN.

I have said that Lincoln's forbears were a non-historical people. That would be equally true to say of all his kith and kin to the present day. But are we not accustomed too much to minimize private citizens and magnify public men? Does not a country owe more to the great body of intelligent and virtuous "common people" than it does even to the truly great? How few of those whom we call great succeed in leaving their country much in their debt. Washington and Franklin did most to achieve our independence and left no wounds on the body politic. Hamilton and Madison made for us the Constitution and did us no great harm; Webster taught us the real meaning and binding force of the instrument on each man individually and committed no great crime. Only how few were like these. Jefferson expanded our territory and taught us we must either grow or die. But he was the father of "State Rights," a dogma which bore secession in its womb and this has proved itself the original and accursed fountain of all our national griefs and woes. Jackson strangled "Nullification," but he first introduced the "spoils system," which together with woeful increase of private wealth so ominously threatens to subvert our very forms of liberty. Clay, by the mere melody of his voice, the charm of his presence and the magnetism of his eloquence held the union together through many stormy periods, but he left us the "American system" which but for Jackson would have wrecked the ship of our infant state in 1833 and at the end of our first century has grown to be an octopus and has made millionaires enough to corrupt the manners and morals of a virtuous universe. So true it is already that the only hope of free government lies in the virtuous instincts of the laboring poor, as Lincoln was so wise and good to tell us.

To this humble class so blessed by heaven all of his contemporary kin had the high privilege incontestably to belong. But it does not follow that there were not among both men and women of high moral and intellectual worth and the highest moral standing in the state of Virginia. There lived in those times in the valley of the Shenandoah, now of bloody memory, ten men of his English great grandfather's blood that would have reflected no small honor and afforded no stinted pleasure to the ex-president if he had dwelt in the midst of them. Half their number were farmers; men of character and more than ordinary ability; men who by common consent stood in the forefront of their class, a class among strict integrity and a high sense of honor was quite as essential as success in business to a man's social position.

They held and their descendants continue to hold



every acre of the original rich and fertile land. Neither of them contemporary with him inherited to exceed 160 acres. Only one left less than he had inherited. He had graduated at two celebrated universities and left nothing. One of these farmers left to his heirs 6,800 acres originally granted to his mother's brother for revolutionary services, having been one of Washington's generals. Two others of these grandsons left over a thousand acres each of fine farm land in a high state of cultivation, still held by their heirs. Two of the grandsons were doctors of no mean capacity. One of these finished his medical career in St. Louis. The other who destroyed his physical constitution by graduating at the University of Virginia and afterwards at the University of Pennsylvania, a medical institution, and died in middle life at the head of his profession in his native county. Two brothers, his great grandsons were lawyers and college-bred men of fine literary attainments. One of them graduated at Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. His name is still kept on their roll of graduates as the most remarkable of their students for his eloquence. He studied his profession with a very able judge of the circuit who was his uncle. Being a man of exceedingly popular manner and a natural born stump speaker, an amusement which the southern people delighted in, he was sent to the legislature as soon as he was old enough. He was soon rated as being the most eloquent member of the body, and that when great men were used to be sent there and when the amazing music of the voice of Patrick Henry still lingered lovingly along the corridors and arches of the classic capitol at Richmond. Like Mr. Lincoln he had a passion for surveying acquired in his boyhood among his native mountains as deputy for his father who was many years county surveyor, and indulged this taste by accepting a commission to trace and plat Virginia's large military reservation in Western Kentucky. In performing this task he fell a victim to the malaria then so prevalent and fatal in that region and died at Lexington at the age of thirty-two. And great was the grief and pity of all his hosts of friends, for in all the years I have lived and kept watch of public men and events I can recall no senator or congressman from Virginia who was more brilliant, more eloquent or more able than he.

By a singular fatality two of his younger brothers died young from not dissimilar causes; the eldest on the Illinois River at Pekin, and the other among the everglades in Florida while fighting Osceola under Gen. Taylor. These two brothers were together at West Point about the time of Gen. Sherman's services there, but only the youngest entered the army. The elder of these two also studied law with his distinguished uncle, one of the best judges I ever practiced before. This second pupil of his was tall, handsome and exceedingly winsome in manner and possessed a fine and graceful delivery and exceedingly chaste and polished diction both in speaking and writing and was a man of lofty character and chivalrous disposition. He, like his elder brother, early be-

gan to thirst for political distinction and was beginning to set his pegs for a congressional career at the time Mr. Lincoln was unfolding the wings of his young genius in the legislature of Illinois. It is not known that they ever met and not at all probable they were even aware of the close ties of kindred between them. If these brothers—the two lawyers—had lived to a reasonable old age, possessing as they did ambition so similar, though of course not possessing the varied powers of Lincoln that overtopped everybody, I have no doubt they would have broken the family record and perhaps made some history. They had early breathed the air of that far famed valley to which Washington was so fond to look for help in his direst need and which furnished Stonewall Jackson with that bloody band of heroes that were so proud to make of him the Phil Sheridan of the second Rebellion. They had in their veins the blood of a general of the Revolution; one of Washington's braves. Their father had volunteered to fight the British in 1812 when he was over sixty and one of his sons who was only sixteen.

As for the soldier who succumbed to the fatal climate of Florida in the hottest of summer, and was not even allowed to taste the sweets of dying on the battlefield, no mortal can dare to forecast a career for a soldier, however long the fates may see fit to spare life to him. It takes many things besides intellectual ability and courage, and even opportunity, to make a great soldier. I only know that he had graduated well from West Point and had the most accomplished manner and the most brilliant conversational power of any man I ever met, and that I loved him as Jonathan loved David. He gave his life for his country and no grateful stone even marks the place where his ashes rest.

Of these two gentlemen and their sisters, too, of no mean gifts, I have only this to add: I have lived with four generations of men; I have dwelt in many states and known many good people well; I have drifted from the Atlantic to the Rockies with the inimitable American border life where strong men loved to congregate, but I have never known an equal number of people of one generation and one strain of blood of equal mental and moral strength and culture. By careful marriages physical characteristics can readily be transmitted. No doubt, single moral and mental traits are often handed down, but the mystic combination that fits a man for greatness occurs only in the crucible of nature and even then he must be tormented with a sleepless thirst for the myth of fame and still more must nature take him in her lap and furnish high occasion to display his powers.

Mr. Lincoln had many strains of good blood in his veins of which there flowed in greater part the rich royal blood of the laboring poor, but it was only after his armies had conquered in a hundred rebellious fields that he was able to stand on the graves of his patriotic dead and utter words that will be recited and read in farthest

ages and farthest countries as long as the centuries shall last and patriotic fervor shall find room in human hearts.

Patrick Henry with his single great power could warm and beat and melt the giddy Colonial youth by the electric spark that was leaping fresh and hot and instant from his lips to offer himself as food for bullets and worms, but when the blaze died out with the dragging years, only Washington was there with his higher varied powers and persistent care to keep the smouldering fires alive in the weary worn veteran's heart and we went free.

The Virginia relations of Mr. Lincoln, whom I have been endeavoring to describe, were not Lincoln's at all excepting his grandmother, and she only became one after her marriage. Her folks, as I said, belonged on Cook's creek in the south part of Rockingham county, and the Lincolns lived in the north part on Linville's creek and were an entirely different strain of people. The first Lincoln to come into the county came before the county was organized, when the land was all in the original wilderness. With a most extraordinary good judgment, or good fortune, or both, he selected one of the very best all purpose tracts of land between the Atlantic and the Rockies and made a home out of it that it has pleased his descendants to occupy ever since. He must have been a man imbued with the profoundest religious sentiments, as he rushed for the Bible every time one of his children was born and called them one after another Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But strange to say Jacob was born first and the property all fell to him under the law of England, then in force. Jacob took the land and left his brothers to provide for themselves, but he made the best amends he could by leading his company into tide-water Virginia to fight the British and brought back a few negroes to help him cultivate his farm. He left three sons, but got the names a little bit jumbled and they ran, David, Jacob and Abraham, so little attention did he pay to biblical chronology. These three sons of Captain Jacob were contemporary with the ex-president and I knew them fairly well personally. They were stout, blocky men of medium height, full habit, florid complexion, and quick tempers. They owned the best land in the country—enough and no more of it, and farmed it in the very best manner. They borrowed no money and had none to lend. Their word was as good as their bond. They could read, write and cipher and that was as much as they cared for. If they ever heard a sermon I guess it was a funeral. They were partisan democrats of the straightest sect. One of them (David) ordered me out of his house for criticising, rather sharply perhaps, Jackson's administration. I refused to go because his house was a "public" and he readily forgave me.

None of the brothers ever craved any but military offices. They went to every war that occurred anywhere convenient and always went as captain, fought well, and came back captain. Abraham ad-



vanced several grades during a long peace and was a militia colonel, but no war occurred in his time except the war with Mexico and that was outside of militia jurisdiction. A son of David Lincoln wore the honored name of Abraham and bore himself nobly at Bull Run as a captain of a company on the rebel side and begged to be allowed to go on to Washington, but was restrained by Mr. Davis who had won glory enough to bank on for several years after.

These three brothers of Mr. Lincoln's generation, David, Abraham and Jacob, lived in good houses, built large barns, planted large orchards, kept fat horses and sleek cattle and were happy and satisfied with their most honorable vocation.

These model farmers of Linville creek had two sisters like them, and yet not altogether like them. They were mild and gentle and housewifely women. They were not accomplished except only as wives and mothers should be. The wedded name of one of them was Coffman. The husband was gentle and kind and respected by his neighbors. A master of his craft and not a worshipper of money. In all that he was like her. Her family admired and loved her greatly. Her children were handsome and well grown and well brought up. They were all of them with her or nestled close around her. Their farm was on Cook's Creek, one of the two royal streams that drain the richest and most beautiful fields in the world, gently undulating to their banks, and furnishing fecund irrigation to unrivaled meadows. Their farm was a very gem of that region. Each field seemed to out rival the field that adjoined it. Their house was comfortable and commodious, the barn was large and fairly bursting out with the harvest it garnered. But a morning came upon them that was loaded with a deep and unutterable anguish. It was a veritable war morning and only one word describes such a morning—"War is hell." The weather was warm, the sky had been blue and clear and men were already afield exultant with genial toil, and the furrows turned up smooth and glistening. But anon dense pillars of angry smoke were everywhere mounting skyward and coming abreast like an army marching. General Sheridan had long encamped among those scenes. He had been wont to kindle houses out of inconsiderate wrath, out of unfounded suspicion. If a favorite "aid" should fall in battle he would seize his torch and make it hell for women and children. Perhaps it was religion, but it was not the religion of Washington. The word flew everywhere on these angry smoke columns that Sheridan was retreating and firing the country he could not conquer, and all was consternation. The troopers came rushing on with their torches. Mrs. Coffman ceased to be a woman and became suddenly a Lincoln. She greeted them gently but calmly and told them her maiden name was Lincoln, first cousin to the President. The brave fellows saluted and disobeyed orders and Abby Lincoln's farm went unharmed.

My father's brother married the other sister, but I can't remember her. Her father left her a

fair legacy and two slaves—Scipio Africanus and Anne. She lived only a short time to bless my uncle and left little Jack to the tender care of her doting slave woman. Through all the days of our early years Jack was my double. We slept in the same bed, studied of the same books and were exactly of the same size, tastes and disposition. We attended the same college and Jack became a very elegant and accomplished writer. During all these years he was the sun, moon and stars to old Anne. His mother's paternal legacy went into a farm for him and Anne made it home for him with religious care and comfort, and right fondly he cherished and honored her and when her days were about to be numbered he sat constantly for many days at her bedside and sorrowing for his friend of friends received her last lingering conscious gaze as the light of life went out of a beautiful picture of a fond master and willing slave.

Jack grew lonely and sad without his old "mammy" and married a beautiful and accomplished lady. He was an honorable, scholarly man and as free from the love of money as his great cousin. He died recently of simple old age, county treasurer at Bozeman, Montana, and his daughter Bettie, the most beautiful of women, is county superintendent of schools in that county.

This is the last I have to say of Mr. Lincoln's blood relations. Of his mother's relations I knew nothing; of herself I only know and believe, from all I have heard from others, that she was sensible, noble, and good and poor, and well fit to be the mother of the best man of modern times. And now I will do myself the pleasure to say that according to my best information and judgment no president ever had better blood in his veins or was more honorably connected than Abraham Lincoln.

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### LINCOLN BEFORE HE WAS GREAT

The first time I ever saw Abraham Lincoln was in 1856. He was known about Springfield as an honest man that everybody liked. He was known in the courts 'round about as a good trial lawyer, and a good story teller about the tavern fire. He was even accounted a good stump speaker and something of a politician, in a small way. But if anybody had ventured to call him a great man, he would have been violating the modesty of nature and his listener would have felt shocked. Douglas was the single great man of the north-west. He had filled every office and was senator at the time. Chicago was a country town, and though the largest in the west, was to all appearances the meanest in the lot. The houses were all wooden and the streets were all mud and the mud was exceedingly sticky and very deep. But she thought herself a great city, as in commerce she was; and Douglas, not without equal reason, thought himself a very great man. His equal has not lived there before or since. He had struck the strings of the harp of fame in 1850, and struck them hard. He walked the streets in all the pride of his manly beauty

and the full consciousness of his power. He had dared a few years before to step outside the ranks of party and aid with the democratic contingent to pass Clay's last great Compromise Bill which turned back the hands on the clock of war, and enabled that grand old statesman of majestic mein and melodious voice now tremulous with natural age and patriotic toil to go down to his rest in peace.

Lincoln on the contrary had only had a single term in congress and left no mark. He could thread a crowded street, towering above them all, as free from selfconsciousness as any blanket Indian, and with that same far-away look in his eyes that denoted not some hidden grief, but only deep thought. The first time I ever saw him was in his law office down in Springfield in the autumn of 1856. Chicago was then in its highest, wildest boom. Many margin operators in corner lots began to quail. Four of us met and took account of stock, and decided to close out our several deals. We all began to love the prairie grass and the wild flowers and the innocent joys of the quiet country life, and to inquire of each other as to where it would be best to locate. The latitude of Springfield in the grand prairie proved to be the general choice. \$1.25 an acre was the most approved price. Good land at that price in large tracts had grown scarce, while there was decidedly nothing small about us. It was then remembered that under the swamp land laws of the United States, the state of Illinois had quietly got title to a large acreage of the finest farm land in the world without a speck of swamp on or near it. The choice pieces were held at boom prices. It was promptly advised to be our duty, if possible, to restore these lands to the general government on the equitable grounds of fraud or mistake, and then enter them at government price. With the usual celerity of Chicago men we proceeded to examine the land and prepare the proofs. After finding 100 quarter sections suited to our taste, which would give each man 4,000 acres for his modest home at the reasonable first cost of \$5,000, we cast about for a lawyer to put the "job" through. Various names were suggested, Mr. Lincoln's among the rest. It was admitted that he would not undertake a bad land case and as he lived in a land office town, it was conceded that he would be most apt to know the law, or at any rate know how to find it, which we didn't.

So down we rushed to Springfield and upstairs to his office, never doubting that we virtually had four of the finest farms in our clutches to be found in the round world, and that, too, at a price beyond the reach of financial depression, or any ghost of possible danger from any source. We found the office dark and dingy, as was the fashion in those primitive days everywhere west, and very plainly furnished. A man was "scrooched" low in a chair with his elbows on his knees and a book in his hands reading law for dear life. After quite awhile he looked up and said "howdy," and began to unfold the greatest length of manhood I had ever seen until I became fully satis-



fied if his head was as long as his legs he was the very man we wanted and proceeded to state the case. The statement being finished, in order to cut off guessing about the matter, I ventured a little advice to him which was to take time, plenty, and examine thoroughly as we intended to follow his advice, cost what it would, expecting of course, it would be to bring suit. He told us to come back in two weeks. Promptly at the end of two weeks I presented myself confident to receive an affirmative answer, but to my sore surprise it was bluntly negative—"you can't do it." By that time I had come to fairly dote on country life and prairie grass and 4,000 acres in a farm. I had sold my Chicago margins and was fairly ready to move. I was too stunned at first to find anything to say. Of course the man was honest, for who ever heard of an attorney refusing a fat case before—I could not have done that myself. The matter of the fee for advice began to run in my mind. Lawyers I knew were accustomed to charge in proportion to the amount involved. The property was worth \$25,000 at the government price—now a half a million at least. We should have insisted on paying, if encouraged to go on, a handsome cash retainer and a thousand or more in the event of a final success. I thought as we had to give it up and take nothing for our share, I would try my best to beat him down to \$50, if I could. When he said it was \$5, I paid it and went out. When I reached the street I began to feel ashamed of myself for accepting his work for so mere a pittance, and after he was elected president I tried to forget how little it was.

Many years later I had occasion for a lawyer to examine a title in Chicago to a property of not dissimilar value and thought honest father, honest son, and I went to the son. I found an office appointed in the latest fashion and a man about half his father's length. In about two weeks I received an elegant abstract with authorities noted, showing conclusively I could not win and the fee marked on the papers was \$50. I concluded the son was as honest as his father, no doubt, and a good enough lawyer for me, but probably would have more trouble getting to be president even if he should ever desire to be that. Mr. Lincoln seemed to regard his selection as counsel to be a mark of affection for himself and regretted the hard necessity of charging them at all. His son probably considered they came to him for the best advice to be had in the town. At all events he may have realized he was the son of a president and his father never was that.

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### LINCOLN AS A STORY TELLER.

I had heard so much about Mr. Lincoln's story telling gift that I was anxious to see him on exhibition. He had been so solemn and brief in his office, I could scarcely believe he ever unbent. It was not long, however, until I had the opportunity to see for myself. Murray McConnell, a lawyer living in his district, of some distinction and more land, brought him to Chicago to try a case about

lots, and they stopped at the hotel where I lived. Of course in these days nobody in the boom city could stop to hear a law suit unless compelled by order of court. But in the evening after business was over and the candles lit, there would be a few people who were willing to escape their daily grind. It was whispered one of these evenings that the country lawyers were then in the parlor and would no doubt entertain. Quite a little audience dropped in and they felt inspired to begin. McConnell was a good story teller, but his repertoire was not unlimited, and Lincoln was familiar with his whole stock in trade, whereas, Lincoln could both make and tell them and nobody could ever anticipate him. On that occasion he acted as master of ceremonies and would call for such a story by name as he wanted McConnell to tell, and after laughing at it as heartily as anybody else, he would without request tell one of his own. He never laughed once at his own story, but would give a slight chuckle to start the laugh and then sober up. The fun ran fast and furious till bed time, and I don't think any of the company ever laughed as much. He was far the best story teller I ever met, and excepting his father and his uncle Mordica, of whom I have heard, he was without a rival in that line.

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### THE JOINT DISCUSSION—LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS

The war with Mexico was as wicked and unjustifiable as the war on the Transvaal. Mr. Lincoln, along with all the Whig party, opposed it. It was a southern measure. For the South it was worse than a crime—it was a great blunder. It was absolute fatuity. Like all great crimes, usually, it brought condign punishment in it authors and instigators, and it fell out that Mr. Lincoln was the instrument. The north had patiently submitted to the annexation of Texas. The North even consented that Texas be divided into five states and elect ten senators—a most wonderful magnanimity. But the South wanted both southern expansion and northern repression. The South then as always before, owned the administration. A southern man was president, a southern man was his foreign secretary. They desired to expand along the gulf and didn't care much for the north pacific coast. They gave England nearly six degrees, 400 miles, of that coast line, between Washington and Alaska with small demur and against the platform on which the people had chosen them, and went to war for an equal slice of Gulf coast. A very good way, very manly and honorable way, when a rich man wants his neighbor's little field, is to at least offer to buy it before drawing his revolver to force him to pull down his fences.

Many very good people have ventured to think that would have been admissible in our Philippine business. Without stopping to parley with Mexico, we marched an army into what had always been her territory and grandly took what we wanted. But what we got was an unbroken land,

and turned out to be unfit for slavery. The North which had hitherto been patient and submissive, began to grow expansive and "drew the line" on what was unfit for slavery. This brought on the usual threats of secession. This new danger to the Union brought Henry Clay back from his retirement, and with the help of Webster and Douglas, a grand and patriotic trio, passed his great compromise which it was hoped would forever dispose of the slavery question. This hope, however, soon proved a delusion. The South soon found that her Mexican Conquest had forever and forever destroyed the last hope of the "Equilibrium." As usual the South still threatened secession. To head off another cyclone, Mr. Douglas introduced that Kansas-Nebraska bill which gave occasion to the far-famed joint discussion which destroyed Douglas and elected Lincoln president. Up to the time of the introduction of this fateful bill, Douglas had been a "blooming success" in politics, while Lincoln had walked humbly in the shadow of an remorseless majority, doubtless nursing his unsuspected rivalry not without a manly jealousy, waiting for Douglas to make a "bad break." This was bad enough in all conscience, and all the worse because it was his first one in all those tedious years of Lincoln's waiting. When Douglas first came home to Chicago, after submitting his bill, he was met by a howling mob, threatening to read him. This, however, only brought out an unsuspected element in his nature—his grand and masterful personal courage. He faced them like a lion in his lair and roared them into sullen silence then bravely and grandly delivered his oration of self defense.

But he was now soon to stand for re-election to the senate. Lincoln saw his opportunity was come at last. His long feigned modesty was laid aside like an ill worn garment, and he came forth, sling in hand, confident and exultingly to meet his Goliath. His best friends were atremor at his rashness. Such is the painful distance the people are used to measure off betwixt greatness developed and greatness in embryo. It was bad enough for Lincoln to enter himself even for a still hunt against the greatest orator and statesman of the United States senate. But when Lincoln threw his flag defiant to the breeze, emblazoned with a mad challenge to a joint discussion, which only too plainly meant "war to the knife and knife to the hilt," people stood aghast and the general verdict was that the modesty of nature was overstepped—an untried advocate of an untried party against the full trained leader of the old historical party; the party of Jefferson, the party of Jackson. Lincoln alone seemed stupidly unconscious of his danger, or the incongruity of the situation. He made his first address alone in Chicago. I didn't go to hear it. The speech, if it didn't fall flat, was plainly not inspiring. I did not like anybody's politics at that time, and especially not Lincoln's. I feared his politics would destroy the Union, and with me the Union was a fetish. I had been taught to believe the Union was a rope of sand—the south could break it up like a joint snake whenever she was mad enough. I had al-



ways considered the war against Mexico as unprovoked and as wicked as England's war against the bravest race of men and women in Christendom—a race whose only offense is to say the Lord's prayer and read the sermon on the mount—England's perfected travesty on Christianity. I confess myself superstitious. I had long dreaded condign punishment on my unhappy native section, all the more perhaps I was living in exile so far away from it. I hated a secessionist: I detested an abolitionist. I had lived for some time in Illinois, but had never voted any ticket. I considered both their positions noxious. Before the joint discussions were reached the democrats were jubilant and pitiless with jibes and jeers for Lincoln. The republicans were tremulous and silent. The first joint meetings were held in southern Illinois, then well nigh as southern as South Carolina, and the democrats claimed the victory, but not immodestly. There it was the august senator "speaking down" at the unarmoured citizen. He so far forgot his dignity as to speak even rudely of his undistinguished opponent. But when they had been heard at Galesburg (then, if not even still, the Athens of Illinois) the republicans boldly claimed equality and the democrats no longer disputed it. It was, however, in northwestern Illinois, the region that afterwards furnished a Grant to the army, and a Washburn to the national counsels, that Lincoln drew his fatal weapon and threw away the scabbard. It was there that, at the risk of defeating himself for the senate, he determined to "kill" Douglas for the presidency and propounded these fateful, fearful questions to Douglas on popular sovereignty. Douglas felt at once the blow was vital and took the questions "under advisement." It was of no avail to ponder. If he answered one way he must lose the South; if the other way he must lose the North; without both he could not be president, and Lincoln had won the victory. But the end of the discussion left them the two greatest intellects of their generation in America. The sequel proved the one as patriotic as the other. Douglas spent his dying breath trying to rally the brave northwest to the support of Lincoln and the country, when the fate of the country hung in the balance and the northwest held the scales. Lincoln, more favored, oozed out his life blood rejoicing over the final victory. With the generous and essential assistance of Douglas, he had saved his country. It has never happened before and most likely will never happen again that two men, first rivals in love, and so long rivals in politics, have been allowed to fraternize so nobly and on so grand and vital an occasion as did Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln on the altar of their country and that, too, on the instant when the life of this great nation was passing through the very agony of threatened dissolution.

Adams and Jefferson developed a senile friendship after their blood had grown thin and their steps become feeble, and even that looks handsome in a picture. But the friendship of Douglas and Lincoln was the instinct of two giant men in

all the pride of life and was possibly essential to the greatest glory and happiness and power of the Anglo Saxon race.

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### VITAL CAUSES OF OUR CIVIL WAR

The evil genius of the South was expansion. The evil genius of the North was development. In the early part of the century it was hard to tell which was the nearest like a paradise, the North or the South. The one had the land, the other had the sea, and there was breathing space for all men. In the South the fresh soil was fecund and easy. The gin had been invented, King Cotton was in his boyhood and springtime was about him. The planter was well in his vigor with no thought for the future, his wife was in her girlhood, his children were small. His home was among the pines and the oaks, where the birds were pairing and nesting and the bobolinks were singing to their mates. Even the fishes disported in the stream that ran by the house, the grass on the lawns was beginning to grow green and the early flowers to peep through the winter browned sod. The white were in the distance and the clearing still beyond. The dusky laborer went forth with his hoe to tickle the small plant and keep its bed clear of tares. His glad song resounded, his heart was opening to let in the morning and he was tasting the joys of employment so easy and light. The sunlight was dancing on the leaves of the forest that everywhere surrounded, the holding was large. No neighbors to spy and the fat slaves were being lifted out of the savagery that had cursed their fathers with cruelty and death, and they were well clothed and well fed, well cared for in sickness and in health and were contented, happy and loyal; their sunshine was glorious and their sky unclouded and bright.

But the same sweet light tipped the mountain peaks in the far away North, the breath of the morning was as invigorating and pure, the bird notes were as wild, the meadows as green, the streams were more limpid, the waters brighter, the speckled trout leaped higher at the fly, and the blue-eyed maidens, if not more lovable, were at least more fair and the men were as sturdy, if not more brave, for Bunker Hill was not far away and they greeted their southern cousins with a most rare joy and ardent embrace as they came bounding over the Atlantic waves to taste once more the summer joy the North only could give; nor did they dream a day ever could come when all this love would turn to horrid hate. But such times and scenes were not good for man and mayhap turned his heart from God and quick development was sent like forbidden fruit to Eden's bower to teach him how to grieve and mourn. Soon the waterfalls were hammered down and rock buttressed fast, the streams were fouled and fishes fled and mills belched out their smoke and boys and girls shut in to become white slaves. People were imported and enticed to swell the profits of petted lords till sweat shops and soup houses took the place of joyous plenty and repose

and with the help of fiction poesy, the pulpit and the platform, black hatred took the place of love and the South was made to feel and know that by her many and vast expansions, while full in federal power, devoted by her own consent to freedom and the northern weal, she had built a hostile cordon about herself and cut off all power to emigrate her African people whom she had redeemed when naked and defenseless from cannibal masters and idol worship and taught to know and serve their God. She could see at last that her ever increasing negro population was to be dammed back upon her exhausted fields and she must set them free and drive some off and live with others unrestrained and growing daily more idle and vicious till life would become intolerable for either race.

It was then the wild panic seized her. Dreading to see her well restrained, but half barbarians, let loose and relapsed, not knowing how great and gentle and just our Lincoln was, she madly resolved to fight her way out of the trap she herself had blindly set and brought upon herself emancipation, reconstruction, negro suffrage and disfranchisement of the whites, and upon the poor negroes she had nurtured, cherished and restrained by far gentler means, first the Ku-Klux, and after that the burning stake by Judge Lynell, to exercise those brutal instincts begot of suns and climes which had slept through slavery's watchful care, but were not extinct. And now let the apostles who helped the hypnotic Davis preach this craze to life go with their families to reside among their unfettered wards and by gospel songs and holy prayers exercise this lurid heat from dusky veins that has made the plantation unfit for man's abode, or cease from troubling forever more. Their power to afflict an Anglo Saxon race at last has ceased and their theory of the equality of the races, whether yellow, black or brown with white, has become a bye-word and a putrid scorn.

To allay this storm with gentle words or flood it on with blood after the election, became at once the task of the president-elect. We next shall see how he first assayed the gentler way.

Lincoln had no thought of disturbing slavery where it was and would have been both glad and able to protect it in the states, and only asked to exclude it from the territories, and there it could not live anyhow. Having let his golden opportunity escape, if Davis had been as wise and self-contained as he was astute and brilliant, there would have been no civil war, no military emancipation, no reconstruction, no black enfranchisement, no white disfranchisement, no Ku-Klux, no Lynch court, no burning at the stake, no hell upon earth in the unhappy cotton belt. And all so needless and deplorable as we have come to see it, for we no longer "see through a glass darkly," but know of our own knowledge, and have been well taught by our English cousins, that it is not only the right, but the divinely appointed duty of the Anglo-Saxon race, wherever found, to guide and direct, to rule and comfort, to educate and civilize, to subjugate and govern the yellow man, the



brown man and the black man, and all other inferior people, in which we may yet be forced to include, sooner or later, the once all conquering Latin race.

It is just possible that impartial history, when the far future comes to write it, will not sustain the verdict of the 19th century on Mr. Davis. It has pleased many to draw him as a sort of American Agualdo. History may rather elect to compare him with Hannibal. The Carthagenian saw that either Rome or Carthage had to be destroyed. He proceeded grandly till the game was fairly in his reach, and then rested till he lost it. Davis may come to be painted as a man of wonderful prevision. He may be allowed to have seen that the North must be crippled or the South would be crushed. He will be admitted to have been a man of very vast and varied powers. As an orator his power over his people was phenomenal. As a fighter he must rank even higher than Hannibal, if such a thing were possible. As an organizer of what he called a "conspiracy" he must stand without a rival. The election of a man so exactly suited to his purpose for president as Mr. Buchanan was an inspiration. The distribution of his cabinet among his own ablest and most trustworthy lieutenants, interlarded with only a single senile "northern man with southern principles," was a colossal stroke of policy. With a "secret understanding" with both the English and French administrations, and the army and navy and treasury in his own very keeping, that he should have sat down and waited for such a man as Lincoln to be elected, and then waited for him to be inaugurated and accede to the army, the navy, and the United States treasury is a very wonderful and patent a blunder as to more than satisfy people of a religious turn of mind that "his eyes were holden." And even then all was not lost that was worth the saving, if "his eyes had not been holden."

To a man like Davis and a people like his followers, the dream of a grand military empire based on slavery and hugging around the Gulf Coast, expanded from Texas around till it touched British Guiana, was doubtless most ravishing. And for a commercial people like we of the Anglo-Saxon race, such an expansion as that, taken in connection with rejuvenated Cuba and Porto Rico, Africa and the Philippines, and all the other loose-lying islands, might have proved something of a saving grace for the sin of allowing the sons of Ham to be any longer held for the servants of servants as they were appointed to be by the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob soon after he came out of Noah's Ark.

Governments have been known to manumit the slaves of other people, but no government ever did manumit its own slaves. To free a lot of Africans and live amongst them is abhorrent. Our northern slave-holding ancestors sold their slaves to southern masters and then ordered them to free them. To compel them to do this we proposed to "surround the South with a wall of fire"

so that they could not move the negroes and would be finally compelled, not only to free the negroes, but to give their land to them to live on, and cross the wall of fire themselves and hunt new homes. It might have been better for them to submit and temporize till we overtook the expansion craze, and felt and saw the evident needs of commerce, and then they might have possessed themselves of the whole South America and filled it up with slaves in the interest of commerce, and we might have felt it a pious duty to send an army to subjugate the natives. So much does the sin of a thing depend upon the date of it and the state of Christianity when it happens. Mr. Davis was not born to Caesar's fortune. He was too slow to assume Buchanan's place, too prompt to challenge Lincoln, and met the fate of Hannibal. History sheds fluent tears for the hard lot of Hannibal and his country. It may come to have some sympathy for Davis and his gallant Anglo-Saxon people in a much shorter time than it was taken in the case of Carthage.

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